

IDW

STAR TREK

#2

HARLAN ELLISON'S

THE CITY on the EDGE of FOREVER

THE ORIGINAL TELEPLAY

From the
winner of eight
Hugo Awards
and four
Nebula Awards



STAR TREK

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THE ORIGINAL TELEPLAY

ORIGINAL TELEPLAY BY
HARLAN ELLISON

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STAR TREK created by Gene Roddenberry
Special thanks to Harlan Ellison, Risa Kessler, and John Van Citters for their invaluable assistance.

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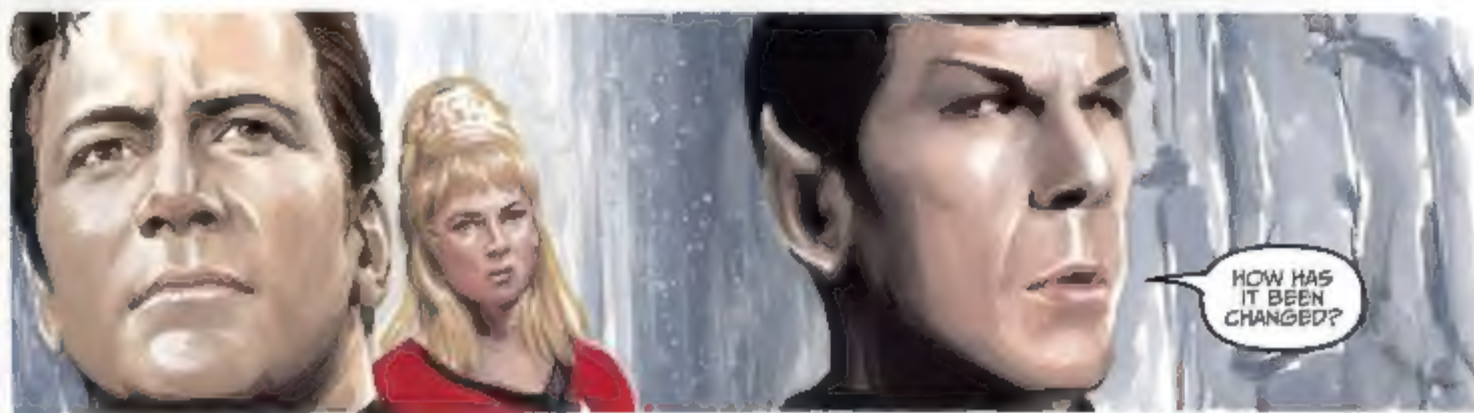


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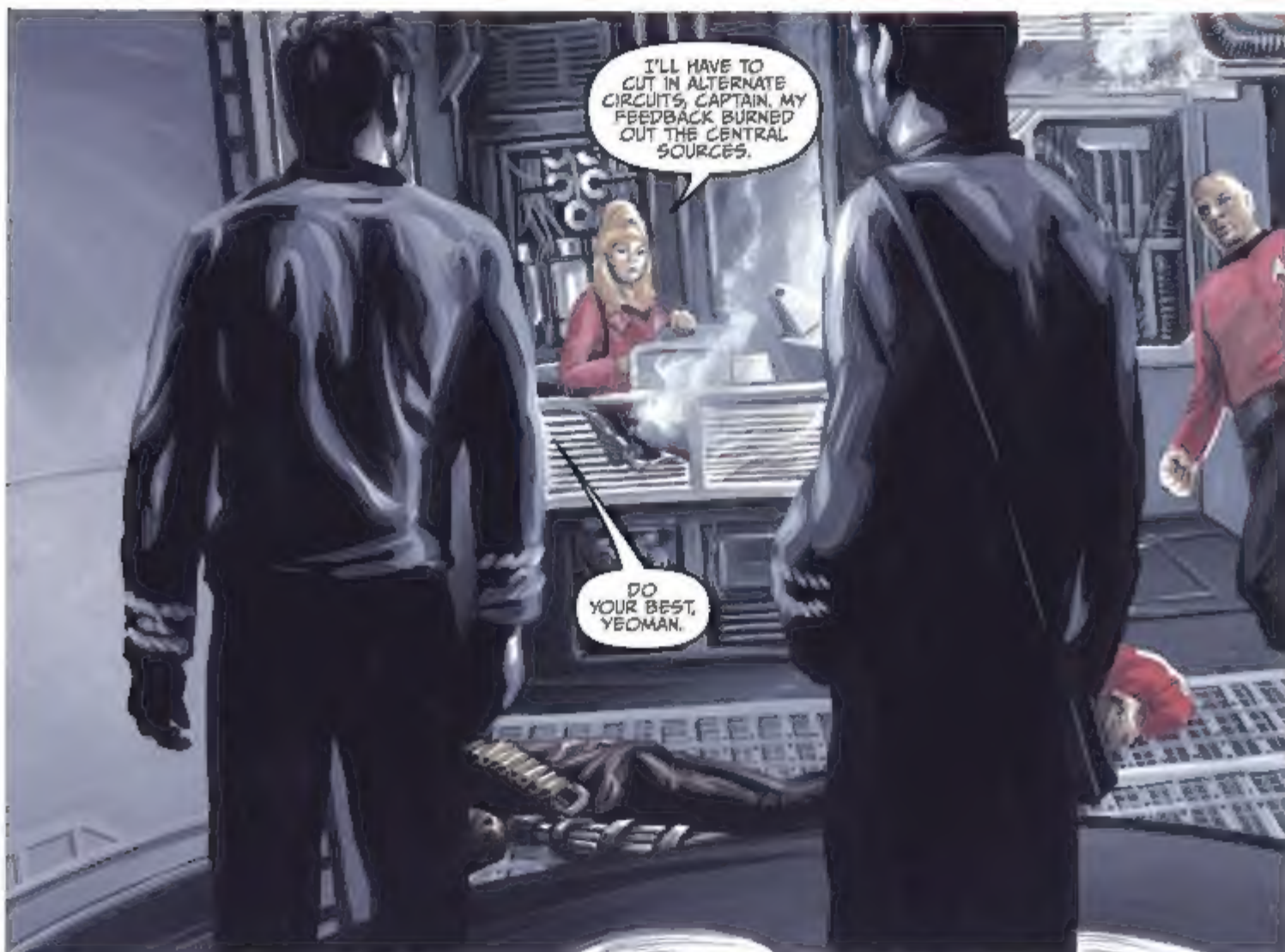






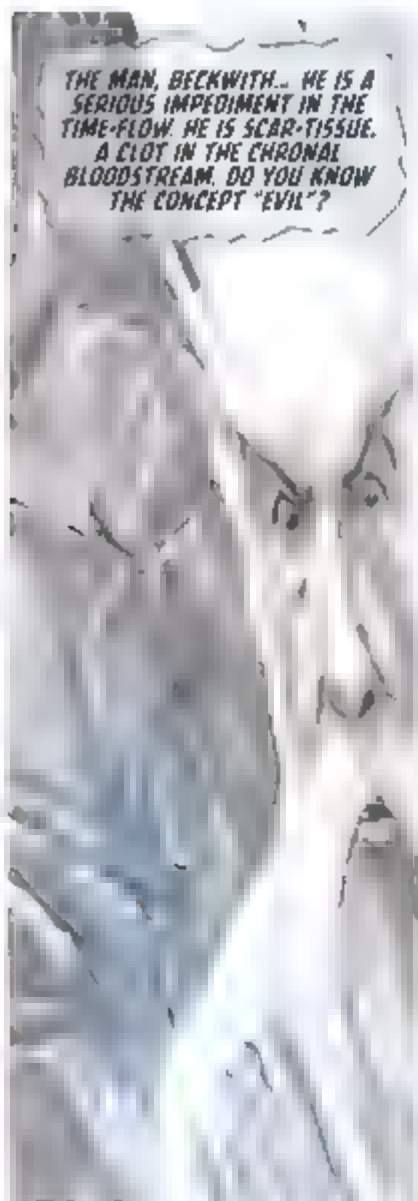




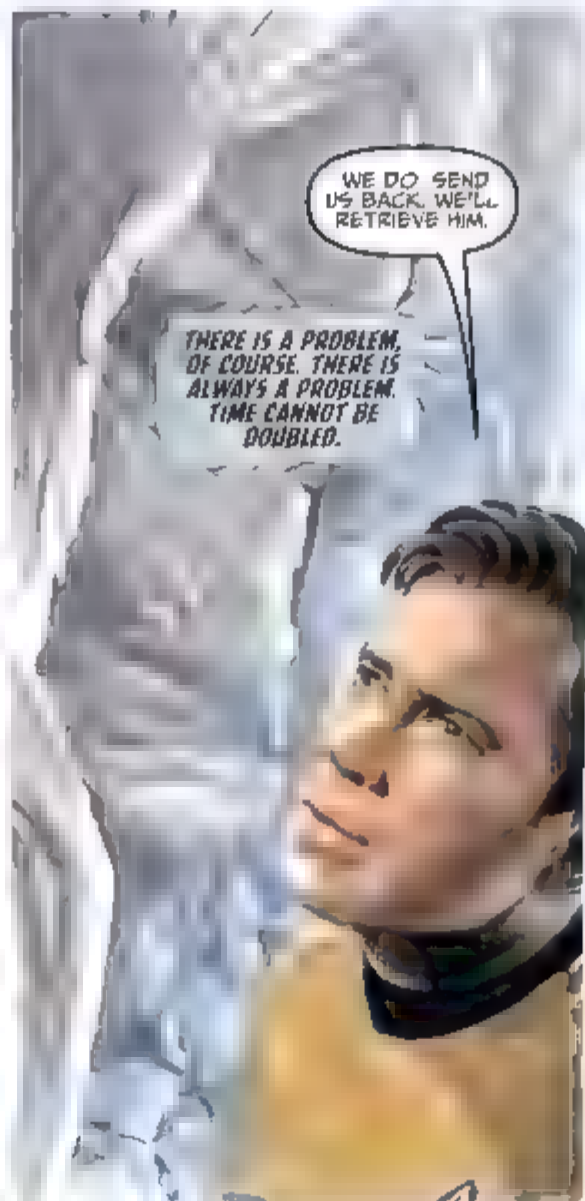




IS TIME IMMUTABLE? OR CAN IT BE SET BACK AS IT WAS BEFORE BECKWITH'S INTERCESSION CAUSED THE KNOTTING?



THE MAN, BECKWITH... HE IS A SERIOUS IMPEDIMENT IN THE TIME-FLOW. HE IS SCAR-TISSUE. A CLOT IN THE CHRONAL BLOODSTREAM. DO YOU KNOW THE CONCEPT 'EVIL'?



WE DO SEND US BACK. WE'LL RETRIEVE HIM.

THERE IS A PROBLEM, OF COURSE. THERE IS ALWAYS A PROBLEM. TIME CANNOT BE DOUBLED.



BASIC PHYSICS TWO OBJECTS CANNOT OCCUPY THE SAME SPACE AT THE SAME TIME YOU CANNOT SEND US BACK TO THE PRECISE TIME OF BECKWITH'S DISAPPEARANCE, CAN YOU?



BEFORE OR AFTER.

BUT NOT
THE SAME

BEFORE HE
GETS THERE HE
WON'T KNOW
WE'VE ALREADY
SETTLED IN.

CAPTAIN, THE
TRICORDER I CAN SET IT
NOW TO RESONATE WITH
THE VORTEX.

THAT WILL
ESTABLISH A BASELINE
FOR DATING, AND ONCE IN
THE PAST, WE CAN GET
OUR CHRONOLOGICAL
BEARINGS.

HOW CLOSE
CAN YOU SET
US DOWN IN
THE PAST?

SOON. CLOSE,
PERHAPS. BUT WE
HAVE NO WAY OF
CALCULATING
SUCH THINGS.

WE'LL GRAB HIM
WHEN HE COMES
THROUGH. WE'LL
BE WAITING

I JUST HOPE
WE WON'T HAVE
BEEN WAITING
FOR YEARS

YES, BUT IN EACH TIME-PERIOD,
THERE IS A FOCAL POINT, AN
OBJECT, A PERSON, SOMETHING
THAT IS INDISPENSIBLE TO THE
NORMAL FLOW OF TIME,
UNIMPORTANT OTHERWISE,
BUT AS A CATALYST...

AND IF
BECKWITH
TAMPERS WITH
IT—TIME IS
CHANGED
PERMANENTLY

IF WE BRING
HIM BACK, THEN
THE RIVER RESUMES
ITS NATURAL COURSE,
EVERYTHING GOES
BACK THE WAY
IT WAS?

WILL
BECKWITH
KNOW WHAT
THIS FOCAL
POINT IS?

NO, BUT THE STRESSES OF
THE TIME FLOW WILL DRAW
HIM TO IT IF HE INFLUENCES
IT, NOTHING CAN RESTORE
THE SHAPE OF THE PAST.

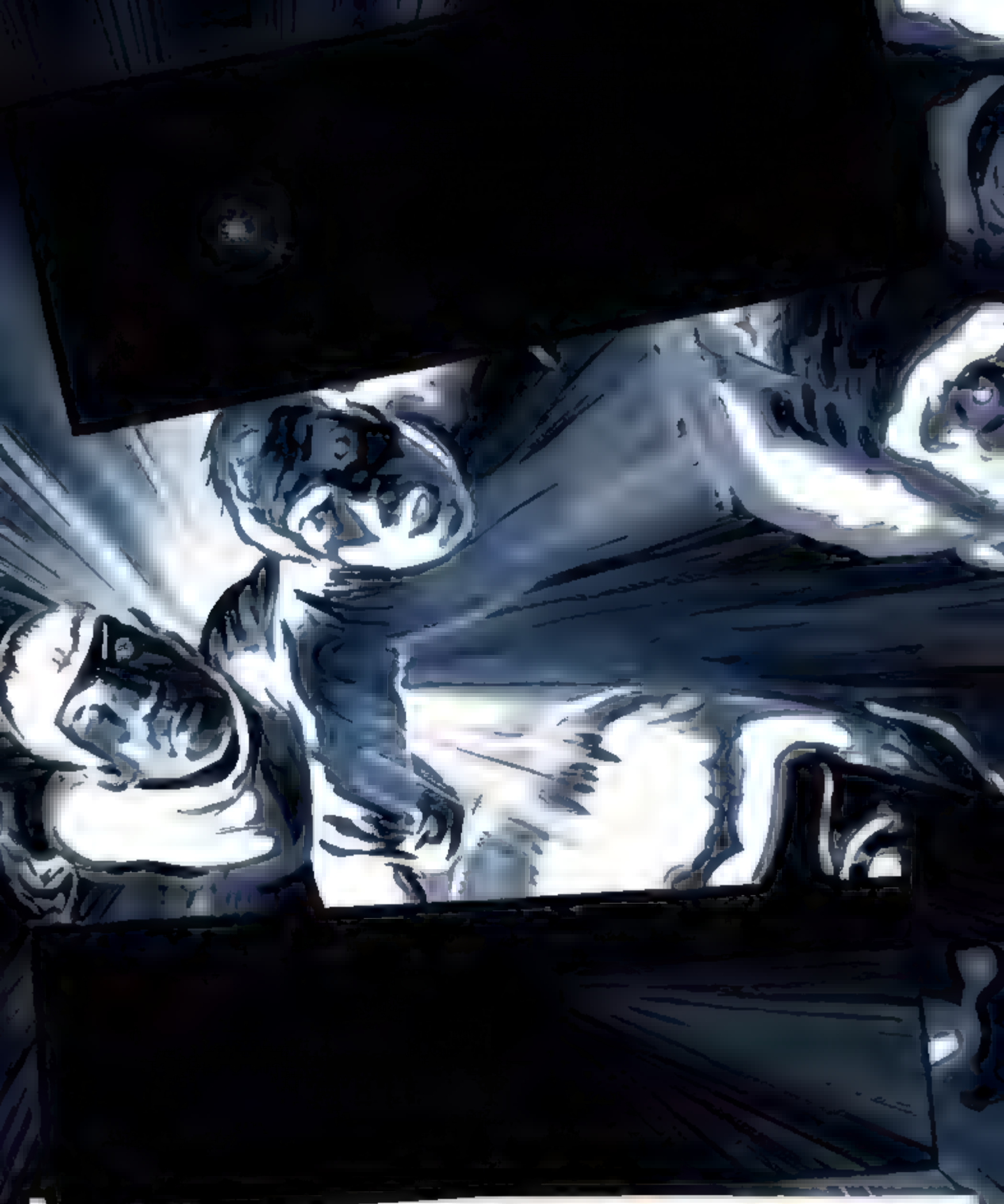
THEN
HOW CAN
WE STOP
HIM?

BRING HIM BACK. HE
WILL SEEK THAT WHICH
MUST DIE, AND GIVE IT
LIFE. STOP HIM.

I DON'T
UNDERSTAND
CAN'T YOU TELL
US MORE?

BLUE IT WILL BE
BLUE AS THE SKY OF
OLD EARTH AND
CLEAR AS TRUTH.
AND THE SUN WILL
BURN ON IT, AND
THERE IS THE KEY.

AS NIGHT FALLS,
THEY RUN LIKE
HUNTERS, AND FOR
ALL OUR WISDOM,
WE ARE HELPLESS.









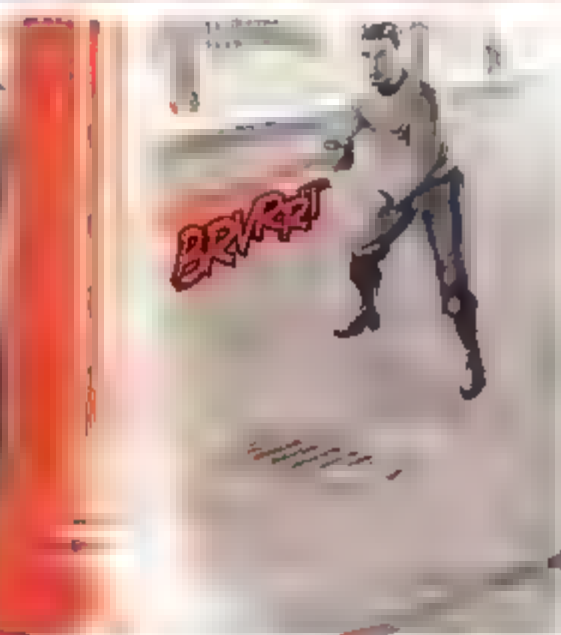
THERE!
THERE'S
ONE!



THERE'S ONE
OF THEM FOREIGN
TROUBLE-MAKERS
WHY'NT WE SHOW HIM
HOW WE LIKE HIS
KIND!



THEY'RE THE
ONES SENDING THIS
COUNTRY DEEPER INTO
THE DEPRESSION!
THEY'RE THE ONES THAT
WANT YOUR BABIES TO
DIE WITH SWOLLEN
BELLES, THEY'RE
THE ONES!







TO BE CONTINUED

EDGEWORDS

Send your questions to: letters@ldwpublishing.com with EDGEWORDS in the subject line and include OK TO PRINT in the body of the email.

In order to launch a lettercol for the long-awaited comic-book adaptation of "The City on the Edge of Forever," it felt right to begin with the Harlan faithful: the fans, friends, and commenters who engage one another in witty fashion over at Unca Harlan's Art Deco Dining Pavilion forum (<http://harlanellison.com/heboard/unc-a.php>). Consequently, I sent out a handful to a dozen forum guests at that site, the only caveat being they share their thoughts about the issue. So let's get to it.

HARLAN INTERJECTS: As we commence, let me state 1) I will answer any and all questions directly and truthfully, but I do not desire to refuel the poisonous "Trekkie" controversies of the last century. For those who wish to read the variorum essay of my Trek adventure, my book is available at [http://ereads.com/erms/authorname/Harlan Ellison](http://ereads.com/erms/authorname/Harlan%20Ellison); 2) I am deliriously happy with this IDW manifestation.

It's been a delight to read the first issue of Harlan Ellison's original teleplay for "The City on the Edge of Forever." The script is faithful to Ellison's dialogue and directions, and the top-notch artwork convincingly portrays Shatner, Nimoy, and Whitney as Kirk, Spock, and Rand. It's a shock to see six stone-like but humanoid Guardians of Forever and to wonder how 1966-67 television production values could have depicted them. I want to see (spoiler alert!) Rand's brave take-charge moments *[CR note: I know the teleplay is nearly 50 years old but I'm still lopping off specific story details mentioned here so as not to spoil for anyone unfamiliar with this version of the story.]*

Ellison's book includes portions of his revised teleplay in which *[CR: Sorry, trimmed some specific story details again.]* Can some of this be shown as extras in the upcoming issues? As a bonus in a (signed, limited?!) book collection to come? Without any mention or depiction of the revised teleplay, readers will be left with the impression that so much of the story in

the beloved televised version came from other writers, when in fact Harlan's revised script is very similar to the final version. *[CR: Readers will get Harlan's complete original story over these five issues. Don't want to confuse that with any revised, alternate versions. This is the complete, original story as HE wrote it.]*

I do have a couple of questions that I wonder if Harlan will answer.

Are there any revisions that Harlan was forced to make, or which the other writers later made, to what became the televised script that Harlan could now say were improvements? If so, which one(s)? For example, does he feel that the story is made stronger or weaker by making it best friend and colleague McCoy who tries to save Keeler and must be stopped, rather than a guest-villain of the week?

HARLAN RESPONDS: Please remember that I wrote this script before the show ever went on the air, and some of the later-set-in-stone tenets of the series weren't even thought of. Much of the character delineation was to come, and thus one of the first-season leads, Grace Lee Whitney as Yeoman Rand, was configured by me. And I did at least six complete rewrites, to accommodate every new "note" the network or some other entity thought would "improve" the script. Do I think any of the eventual changes improved the story? I have only this to say: anyone can come in and re-chew what has already been created. Improved? No, only made different; not the same thing by a light-year. Others painted over my dream, but as you can see from what you're holding, it was I that dreamed this dream. Anyone can be a Monday-morning Quarterback once the dreamer has had the dream... to mangle metaphors.

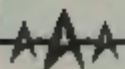
HARLAN INTERPOLATES: I never liked the idiocy of Dr. McCoy being so inept that he injected

himself with the drug that made him nuts. That was someone else. In fact, there is a version-rewrite I did on the original in which I tried to accommodate that suggestion. It exists in my files.

Where do the runes come into play? The "ruins" around the Guardian of Forever in the televised episode were said to have been a misinterpretation of Harlan's description of "runes" in the script. But Harlan's original teleplay doesn't mention runes, nor does the fragment of the second revised teleplay that is included in his book, nor does the artwork in this first issue show any. Were the runes just an urban (Trek) legend?

Regards,
Chris Kovacs

HARLAN ANSWERS: Excellent query. I went back over every snippet of all the script incarnations and, to my surprise, the word "runes" does not appear. So I went to the well of memory (and as the poet Olin Miller has written, "Of all liars, the smoothest and most convincing is memory") and dredged up the afternoon that the art director Matt Jeffries stepped over the low window-ledge of the Costume Room (of Wm. Ware Theiss) where I'd been sequestered for the 8 millionth rewrite, and asked me what the "city" should look like. As the title of the show has a double meaning—the "City" being both the one on the ancient planet of the Guardians and being New York, Earth, in the 1930s, separated only by millennia, I said, "Ancient, incredibly ancient, with runes everywhere, and the ravages of millions of years..." or something like that. It was not Matt's bad that "runes"—glyphs such as on the facade of my home, The Lost Aztec Temple of Mars—was heard as "ruins." I may have garbled it in speaking, or Matt may not have been familiar with the term, but if remembering yet not memorializing that tiny bit of minutiae is anybody's water to carry—it is mine.

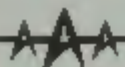


I LOVED IT. LOVED LOVED
LOVED IT.

From the front cover to the dazzling poster in miniature on the second page, it was clear that this is something special. Somebody knew his or her *Star Trek*—and judging from every image there is a significant amount of love infused in each dazzling piece. The colors surprised me—they jolted the scenes to full life. It is like discovering unseen footage of the characters I have loved without apology since the 1960s. Kirk and Spock—every feature perfectly drawn—their expressions just the way they would have been if someone had had the wherewithal to shoot this the way it was written. That said, the artwork is a mighty hook—but the quicksand that caught me and held me until I had read the whole first installment ('til almost 4AM this morning) was Harlan's original story. Stepping off into his words the world closed over my head and pulled me instantly into an intimate place I thought I knew—since childhood. It is familiar—but so far superior that I was saddened... heartsick that they didn't shoot this his way. They took the i-beam out of the story and slapped up unsupported corrugated tin. It wasn't as obvious how short changed we all were—until you showed me the blueprint.

I CANNOT WAIT to read Harlan's depiction of the emotion that Kirk has for Edith Keeler!

Cindy of Webderland and TEXAS



Oh. My. God.

I have now read this a dozen times. Each time, something new popped out at me. The artwork is sublime. The writing, pure Harlan. Congratulations, you've got me hooked all over again!

So many questions, so little space.

If Harlan is willing, I'd like to know more about the internal psychology of Beckwith and what was going through his mind when he escaped from the ship. He hit the red-shirted crewman with the rifle, "KRAK," but didn't keep the rifle or kill the crewman with it. Why did he discard it? Similarly, just before he escapes

into the past, Beckwith is shown with a phaser. But rather than use the phaser to stun, he chooses to fight. Are we seeing the actions of a man who secretly wants to be caught because of his own guilt, or is there something else going on?

HARLAN PARRIES: The disposition choices of rifle and phaser used by Beckwith were J.K. Woodward's artistic selections. I don't think it says anything psychologically deeper than that. But, just for you, here's a small thing few people know: I used the name "Beckwith" for the "villain," because that was the last name of one of the kids who used to beat me up when I was in Grade School in Painesville.

And I love the way Yeoman Rand is depicted as more than just a pretty face. A confident, assertive woman worthy of wearing the uniform and a great take that the original series missed out on.

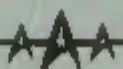
Stephen Perry, whose heart is in Wrigley Field despite his body being in PA



"The City on the Edge of Forever" is the original *Star Trek* made new again, as we experience Scott and David Tipton's faithful adaptation of Harlan Ellison's original screenplay, with characters compellingly portrayed by the youthful faces of *Star Trek's* first incarnation. It really IS them, of course, thanks to J. K. Woodard's careful and informed artistry. I've always felt that adaptations of screen characters should use an approach that differs widely from the flamboyance of superhero comics, and I think everybody involved got that right this time.

As it happens, I was attending my first ever science fiction convention (Tricon, Cleveland, 1966), where Gene Roddenberry previewed the two *Star Trek* pilots for the crowd. It's rare to be able to recapture a bit of the feeling you had when you first discovered something new and captivating like that. This comic does it for me.

Joe Wehrle, Jr.



I've been a fan of Harlan's script for "City" going back to first discovering scenes from it in James Blish's adaptation of the episode ("Hey—why wasn't THIS in the episode?") I didn't think it would ever see production in any form; I suppose the lesson is "never say never."

Still, I was guardedly optimistic when the comic was announced. I've had years to watch this episode in my head, down to Fred Steiner's music cues. The verdict? Strong start. Smart choice in J.K. Woodward, who really ties the visual *Trek* we know to the scenario Harlan crafted, and Juan Ortiz's cover makes it a newsstand stand-out.

The Tiptons' adaptation of Harlan's script is so-far spot on. It's great fun to see it this way, and I'm looking forward to the rest, including Trooper finally getting his fifteen minutes of fame, and that knockout denouement (nope—no spoilers here).

Nice job, IDW! Now, about that second *Phoenix Without Ashes* notion of Harlan's, "Eros In The Chamel House"...

Doug Lane



Many thanks for the first issue of City.

I opened it with curiosity and reluctance.

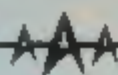
See, it's like this: I've seen the *Star Trek* version of City at least 20 times. It has cropped up at regular intervals on the television throughout the first 30 years of my life. It's like an old friend who shows up every so often. I don't need to dress up, I don't need to keep my elbows off the table.

This comic, therefore, is the intruder. (Anyone else remember the James Blish novelizations? How his source material was sometimes first drafts of scripts and how it trickled through, especially to those of us who'd seen every episode over a dozen times?) It's a little like that. Drugs on the Enterprise? The Gary Mitchell rifle being used to cut open a door? It's like I've walked into my living room to discover all the furniture has been moved around and someone who looks something like my old friend is sitting on the couch I've never seen before.

But I still like this new version of my old friend. I look forward to the story he (or should I say HE) is about to tell.

All best,

Alex Dering



Dear Guardians of Forever,

You've made an old man very happy. I'm not talking about Harlan Ellison, although he has every right to be delighted with your adaptation. I'm talking about myself.

There are vanishingly few examples of filmmaking that I return to over and over again. John Ford's *The Searchers* is one, Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* another, and "The City on the Edge of Forever" is an important third. I watch these every few years because I always come away with new insights. It does IDW credit that this comic book pulls off the same trick.

J. K. Woodward's lush artwork captures the look of the original series without falling into the trap of being too static, as fully painted work can sometimes be. And the familiar pleasures of seeing the original NCC-1701 brought back to life are balanced with the eerie re-imagining of the "zone of no-time" that the Guardians have created on their world. Props to Neil Uyetake as well for his thoughtful and effective lettering.

Scott and David Tipton deserve particular praise for the thankless task of adapting the original work. If they'd got it wrong, they'd have had to suffer the brickbats. In getting it so right, it's Ellison who walks away with the kudos. However, the genius of their adaptation is that Uncle Harlan's inimitable voice is preserved in lines like "This cinder, this empty death of a world."

I can't choose between Juan Ortiz and Paul Shipper's covers, but that's because they adopt such different approaches. I'll take both, thank you.

I first saw *The City on the Edge of Forever* at 5:15 p.m. on Saturday, July 26, 1969. It was the third episode of *Star Trek* to be shown in the UK, and I was five years old. As you can tell, it made something of an impact on me. I always made an effort to catch it on

reruns, but as I grew up and began to read Ellison's writing, I found out that the episode I knew was not the one he'd originally written. In 1996, White Wolf published it along with Ellison's commentary, and I picked the book up as soon as it hit these shores. The original teleplay is fascinating, but my memories of the televised version created a kind of interference pattern. I still prefer the elegance of the later conflation of the Guardians into a single intelligent artifact, but the removal of Lieutenant Beckwith was a mistake.

As with *Phoenix without Ashes*, the comic adaptation clarifies what might have been. It also gives us the rare chance to watch the dead past come back to life.

I think I can see my five-year-old self waving on the other side of the time vortex.

Andrew J. Wilson, Edinburgh, Scotland

That's it for this round—see you next month.

—Chris

COMING NEXT MONTH:

Captain Kirk and Spock, stranded in the past of old Earth, search for the focal point that altered the timestream and changed everything about the universe they knew. And once they find her, they could find themselves foiled by a force even greater than the Guardians of Forever—love!

